

*“Memorandum read by Sir Patrick Jennings, at Meeting of His Excellency, Admiral Tryon, and the Premiers of Victoria, Queensland, and New South Wales, on board H.M.S. ‘Nelson,’ on the 26th and 27th April, 1886.*

“I HAVE thought it desirable to commit to writing the views of the Government of this country on the very important question which is the subject of our present interview. I do this first of all for the purpose of more clearly defining our opinions on the subject, and preventing as far as possible any possibility of misunderstanding; and secondly, with the object of furnishing a basis for the discussion which will take place. We have for some time here inclined to the view that, in proportion to our identifying ourselves, for the purpose of securing perfect naval defence, with the Imperial Government, we shall secure a more efficient service and a more perfect administration than we ourselves could establish by any independent course of action in the colony. More than twelve months ago it was determined by the Government then in existence to ascertain whether proposals for availing ourselves of Imperial assistance, by procuring and maintaining two or more ships of war, to be equipped and manned by the Imperial Government at our own cost, would be favourably entertained. It was ascertained that any practicable proposals of this kind would be received and examined with favourable consideration by the Imperial Government. The result of much consideration on the question by that Government was a recommendation to the following effect: That two vessels of war, the type and design of which were to be determined conjointly by the Admiralty and the Government of the colony, were to be built and equipped by the Admiralty, that the armament was to be approved by the Government, and that the entire expense of building, equipping, arming, and maintaining was to be borne by the colony. It was further considered that the arrangement with the Admiralty in connection with this service should extend over a period of from ten to fifteen years, the ships being equipped, officered, and manned by the Admiralty. The crews were to be secured in the same advantages as to rank, periods of service, and promotion, as if those crews were serving in Her Majesty’s ships in commission. The entire cost of *personnel* was to be borne by the colony, including actual and deferred pay. The control of the ships was to be in the hands of the Naval Commander-in-Chief of the station. There was a further proposal that in time of war the vessels were to be employed within Australian waters, and not to be moved outside the waters of the colony without the sanction of the Government of the colony. And it was to be distinctly understood that the force provided for in this way should be in addition to that provided by the Imperial Government for our defence in the annual vote for Her Majesty’s Navy. There was then a recommendation of the class of vessels which it was deemed most desirable to procure for this service. I have thought it well to refer to this matter with the view of considering the acceptableness of such proposals in this country. While regarding with approval many of the matters to which I have adverted, and while impressed with the conviction that they would be generally found agreeable to our Legislature, I am personally more disposed towards the adoption of a different scheme. It will be perceived that the scheme to which I have referred was an individual one for this country, as no interchange of opinions had then taken place between the various colonial Governments on the subject. I am much more disposed myself towards a general arrangement between the leading Australasian Colonies and the Imperial Government; and I may say, on behalf of the Government of this country, that we are quite prepared to do all in our power to bring about a co-operation, not only between ourselves and the Imperial Government, but between ourselves and the other Australasian Colonies. I shall very briefly put before this meeting my proposal. It is based, first of all, on the very valuable paper which the Admiral has furnished to the various Australasian Governments, dated at Auckland, the 24th December of last year; and secondly, on a very grave consideration of the question in Cabinet. I shall be prepared to submit for the approval of Parliament the following scheme:—

“1. That a sufficient naval defence force be raised and equipped and manned by the Imperial Government for the defence of Australasia.

“2. That the cost of the equipment and maintenance of this force shall be borne by the Australasian Colonies in proportion to their population.

“3. That this force shall generally be retained within Australasian waters.

“4. That the arrangement for this force shall be for a period of ten years; and that, if it is contemplated to abandon or alter the arrangement at the expiration of that period, notice of such abandonment or alteration shall be given at the termination of the seventh year of such arrangement, so that three years’ notice may be afforded to the Admiralty of such intention.

“5. That the liability of each colony towards this expenditure shall be estimated on the basis of population.

“6. That the Imperial Government shall build and furnish the vessels, the colonies providing a fund to recoup the expenditure of construction and allowance for depreciation, say, 5 per cent. on capital account, and paying the total annual cost of maintenance, salaries, and deferred pay.

“7. That the ships are to be equipped, officered, and manned by the Admiralty, and the officers and crews to be secured the same advantages as to rank, time of service, and promotion as if they were serving in Her Majesty’s ships in commission.

“8. That this force shall be absolutely in addition to that provided by the Imperial Government as to Australasian defence in the annual vote for Her Majesty’s navy.

“9. That the recommendations of the Admiral, contained in his circular dated 24th December, 1885, as to the number of vessels, their tonnage, displacement, rate of speed and armament, be adopted. According to that memorandum the colonies would have to provide for the construction of the class of ships known as ‘Archers’ a sum of £526,150; for the torpedo-vessels, £106,600—making a total in all of £632,750; and they would have to pay for the maintenance, provisions, wages, &c., cost of coal and stores, £142,653 per annum. This, irrespective of charges on account of docking and incidental expenses, which it is understood would not be considerable, is, as far as the means at our disposal will permit, a carefully-prepared estimate of expenditure.